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## ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: Ocean Exploration 2016 Funding Opportunity

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-OAR-OER-2016-2004629

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.011, Ocean Exploration

Dates: Pre-proposals must be received by 5:00 PM EDT on October 23, 2015. A complete, maximum two-page, pre-proposal is a requirement in order to be allowed to submit a full proposal. Full proposal submissions must be received by 5:00 pm EST on January 8, 2016. Applications received after the above deadlines will not be considered.

Funding Opportunity Description: NOAA's Office of Ocean Exploration & Research (OER) is soliciting pre-proposals followed by full proposals for bold, innovative, multi-partner, interdisciplinary ocean exploration projects in the following areas of interest: 1) physical, chemical and biological characterizations of unknown or poorly known regions of the deep ocean, especially areas deeper than 500 m. 2) baseline characterization of marine archaeological resources at any depth; and 3) technology that advances ocean exploration and has application to NOAA related missions.

Through this announcement, NOAA OER anticipates the availability of approximately \$3 million. The actual funding amount is contingent upon FY 2016 Congressional appropriations. OER estimates making 3-10 awards that will range from about \$50,000 to \$1.5 million.

Funding for ship or submersible assets, if required, must be included in the proposal. Leveraging with ship time supported outside of this funding opportunity is strongly encouraged.

## FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

## I. Funding Opportunity Description

## A. Program Objective

NOAA's Office of Ocean Exploration and Research (OER) is dedicated to exploring unknown and poorly known areas of the ocean to provide essential ocean environmental and processes information. Resulting discoveries and data are communicated to NOAA programs, the marine sciences community, marine resource managers, and to the public through education and outreach to increase awareness and understanding of the oceans. Through this funding announcement, OER seeks pre- and then full proposals for interdisciplinary ocean exploration expeditions and projects.

Funded expeditions and projects will support OER's goal to acquire baseline characterizations of unknown or poorly known areas of the ocean. Baseline characterizations are the primary objective of ocean exploration, and provide initial information about the physical, chemical, biological, or archaeological nature of an area or process in space or over time. Baseline characterization results in discoveries and insights that stimulate research and inform marine resource management and policy decisions. OER is also interested in projects that focus on technology advancement (sensors) or innovative application of existing technologies and systems (platforms, sensors, data analysis/integration) to increase the pace and scope of ocean discovery.

Results from this funding opportunity will support NOAA's mission by providing environmental intelligence to resource managers and the public.

For a complete description of NOAA's and OER's missions and goals, refer to the OER and NOAA strategic plans: NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration and Research: Strategic Plan FY2011-FY2015 <http://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/about/what-we-do/program-review/oer-str-plan.pdf> ; NOAA Next Generation Strategic Plan <http://www.ppi.noaa.gov/ngsp/>

## B. Program Priorities

OER priority themes for this funding announcement are:

## 1) Ocean Exploration:

Ocean exploration expeditions and projects may be, (a) Place-based: The objective of place-based expeditions and projects is to provide information describing an unknown ocean or poorly known ocean area sufficient to stimulate follow-on research and/or inform marine

resource management activities, (b) Theme-based: Theme-based expeditions and projects are focused on areas that are suspected to host particular marine habitats (e.g., deep coral and sponge communities, chemosynthetic communities, etc.) or focus on particular processes (e.g., submarine volcanism, hydrothermal venting, hydrocarbon seeps, etc.).

Proposals in either category must demonstrate an integrated approach for characterizing the area or theme being investigated (accounting for physical oceanography, environmental conditions, geology, geomorphology, and biology) and for collecting, synthesizing, and disseminating information. Proposals must describe methods for locating features and describe why collecting the information is important for supporting NOAA and national ocean priorities. The Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico, and their respective Exclusive Economic Zones and proposed Extended Continental Shelves, are of particular interest for exploration funded by this opportunity.

## 2) Marine Archaeology:

Marine archaeology proposals that support existing, planned, or potential marine protected areas (MPAs) in U. S. waters are strongly encouraged. Proposals should address topics of high archaeological and/or historical significance. Emphasis is on high-resolution surveys to locate archaeological targets and/or to conduct initial baseline characterization of historic and prehistoric archaeological sites including paleo-landscapes. Applicants must describe how they will use specific analytical tools such as the maritime cultural landscape approach or other relevant theoretical constructs to provide a framework to interpret past human activities. Demonstrating an interdisciplinary science approach for archaeological, geographical, and environmental characterization must be a key component of the proposed effort. Applicants are highly encouraged to use new technologies (e.g., autonomous underwater vehicles, synthetic aperture sonar, etc.) or innovative methods (e.g., for sampling or analysis) that advance the field of underwater archaeology and demonstrate broader applications in ocean exploration.

## 3) Technology:

A priority for OER is the application of new or novel use of existing ocean technologies that can help increase the pace, scope and efficiency of ocean exploration, characterization and understanding. Of special interest are new and innovative sensors, integrated systems of sensors and other unique technologies to make observations and collect data on the ocean's physical, chemical, biological and acoustic properties in areas where these observation capabilities are lacking. Technology-based proposals that eliminate the need for physical samples are of particular interest as are technology advancements that can be integrated into existing ship-based exploration surveys and adaptable to other platforms, (e.g., ROV's, AUV's, landers, etc.). OER is also interested in sensors or systems that explore the ocean in

the time domain in order to gain an understanding of the physical, chemical and biological ocean environments through time. Technologies that address baseline characterization requirements for ocean exploration may also meet other high priority NOAA observing needs. Applicants are encouraged to pursue such broader applications and describe why collecting the information is important for NOAA and national ocean priorities.

To reduce costs, applicants are encouraged to seek vessels of opportunity or leverage other means to test and demonstrate technologies.

#### C. Program Authority

33 USC 3403(a)

## II. Award Information

#### A. Funding Availability

At present, OER anticipates a total of approximately \$3 million will be available through this announcement. Depending on specifics of proposals received, OER hopes to support approximately 3 to 10 awards ranging from about \$50,000 to \$1.5 million. The amount of funding available through this announcement will be subject to the final FY2016 appropriation for the Office of Ocean Exploration and Research. Publication of this announcement does not obligate NOAA to fund any specific project or to obligate all or any part of available funds. There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to initiate or continue exploration activities where funding has been recommended by OER. The amount of funding that OER may recommend for a grant will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and OER. The OER Director may defer selected FY2016 proposals for consideration for funding in the subsequent, or later, fiscal year(s).

#### B. Project/Award Period

The deadline for full proposal submission is January 8, 2016. OER will accept proposals for projects that are one or two years in duration. Given the time required for peer review and processing, the earliest date actual awards will be received is likely to be approximately 150 days after NOAA and OER receive their annual funding appropriations from Congress. Applicants should factor in this timing when proposing their exploration and/or project activities. Activities that are contingent upon this funding should therefore not be planned to start before September 2016.

#### C. Type of Funding Instrument

Proposals selected for funding from non-Federal applicants will be funded through a

grant or cooperative agreement under the terms of this notice. Proposals selected for funding from NOAA scientists will be funded through an intra-agency transfer. Proposals selected for funding from a non-NOAA Federal agency will be funded through an inter-agency agreement transfer.

For applications funded through cooperative agreements, substantial involvement of the Federal government may include, but is not limited to, activities such as specifying direction or redirection of the scope of work due to interrelationships with other projects or stipulating that the recipient must meet or adhere to specific procedural requirements before subsequent stages of a project may continue. By receiving funding from OER, all applicants agree to certain requirements for sample collection, education and outreach, data management, publication and website development. To help meet these requirements, one or more NOAA staff or NOAA designee(s) may become members of the at-sea science party serving roles as Expedition Coordinators, Data Managers, or Web Coordinators. For more details please refer to Section VIII of this document.

### III. Eligibility Information

#### A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include institutions of higher education; nonprofit organizations; commercial organizations; international organizations; state, local, and Indian tribal governments; and Federal agencies.

PLEASE NOTE: Before non-NOAA Federal applicants may be funded, they must demonstrate that they have legal authority to receive funds from another Federal agency in excess of their appropriation. Because this announcement is not proposing to procure goods and services from applicants, the Economy Act (31USC 1535) is not appropriate.

#### B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

Cost-sharing, including matching funds and in-kind, is not required but encouraged. This will be assessed under Evaluation Criterion 4 in Section V.A.2.

#### C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

##### 1. Permits and Approvals

It is the applicants' responsibility to obtain all necessary international, Federal, state, and local government permits and approvals where necessary for the proposed work to be conducted. Applicants are expected to design their proposals so that they minimize potential adverse environmental impacts. If applicable, documentation of requests for or approvals of

cultural resource or environmental permits must be included in the proposal package. Archaeological materials will only be collected under the appropriate permits and with prior accommodation for conservation and curation as described in the Annex Rules of the UNESCO Convention for the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage. Applications will also be reviewed to ensure the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) questionnaire (<http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/questionnaire.pdf>) has been completed and provides sufficient environmental documentation to allow OER to analyze the project's potential environmental impacts, pursuant to NEPA See Section IV.B.2.j)

#### IV. Application and Submission Information

##### A. Address to Request Application Package

Information on this federal funding opportunity and a download link to the application cover sheet required for pre- and full proposals can be found at <http://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/about/what-we-do/funding-opportunities.html>.

For full proposals, grant application information and forms are available through Grants.gov.

Grants.gov requires applicants to register prior to submitting an application. Applicants must also register with System for Awards Management (SAM) found at <https://www.sam.gov>. These registration processes can take several weeks and involve multiple steps. In order to allow sufficient time for these processes, applicants should register as soon as they decide to apply, even if they are not ready to submit their proposal.

##### B. Content and Form of Application

###### 1. Pre-proposal Content and Format Requirements

Complete two-page pre-proposals are required for all submissions and to be able to submit a subsequent full proposal. They should be compelling, concise and clear; should identify project priorities, objective and potential impact of discoveries; describe how the proposal relates to OER's goals) as described in Section I. A & B above; identify all major collaborators and their respective expertise; and include a budget summarizing the major categories of effort, including funds for analysis, publication of results and archiving data.

As appropriate, additional information should be supplied regarding 1) vessels, platforms, or other critical assets required to technically achieve the goals and their costs; 2) dates of anticipated field operations and any operational constraints, especially with regard to field operations; 3) any leveraged resources, in-kind contributions and auxiliary funding sources;

4) anticipated outputs (e.g., potential discoveries, knowledge and impact, published papers, reports and meetings, education and outreach materials); and 5) results from past OER funding.

All pre-proposal submissions must: 1) include the 2-page OER coversheet (<http://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/about/what-we-do/funding-opportunities.html>); 2) not exceed two additional single-sided typewritten pages and; 3) be written on 8.5 x 11 inch paper, in minimum 12 point font, with 1-inch margins; 4) the Principal Investigator's last name should be typed in the bottom right-hand corner of each page; 5) all digital files should be named with the applicant's name and a descriptor of the file, e.g. "Jones coversheet 2016". See Section IV.C for submission due dates and times. Incomplete pre-proposals or pre-proposals submitted after the due dates will not be considered.

The Pre-Proposal must meet the above format requirement when printed out. Failure to follow the requirements above will result in the rejection of the application.

Applicants should review Section V. A. 1 to ensure they have considered all pre-proposal evaluation criteria.

## 2. Full Proposal Content

Full proposals include the content described below, unless otherwise indicated, in the order listed. Applications that do not include all required documentation and information listed below will not be reviewed. (Note: A pre-proposal is a requirement for a full proposal submission.)

Full-proposals must conform to the page limits set below, must be single-spaced, must use a minimum 12-point font, and be formatted on 8.5 by 11 inch paper size, with one-inch margins. Appendices are not allowed. Excluding the coversheet, number each page and label it with the Principal Investigator's last name in the bottom right-hand corner. All digital files should be named with the applicant's last name and a descriptor indicating the file content, e.g. "Jones coversheet 2016".

The Full Proposal must meet the above format requirements and the page limitations outlined below in 2.a-c when printed out. Failure to follow the requirements above will result in the rejection of the application.

See Section IV.C for submission due date and time and for submission procedures



In order to maximize expedition and project effectiveness, it is highly desirable that proposals incorporate personnel, technical, and/or financial leveraging whenever possible.

All full proposals include:

a. Completed Proposal Coversheet: The form can be found at:

<http://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/about/what-we-do/funding-opportunities.html>.

b. Maximum One-Page Executive Summary: Describe the essential elements of the project being proposed. Include: 1) Title, 2) List of names, contact details, and affiliations of each investigator who will significantly contribute to the project, 3) A concise statement of the compelling objectives and benefits of the project and the rationale for the work proposed, and 4) Funding request for each year of the project and the total funding requested.

c. Project Description: The project description is not to exceed 15 pages, including all text and any tables and visual materials (e.g., charts, graphs, maps, photographs). This is a firm requirement. Any project description pages beyond the 15-page limit will be deleted prior to review.

The 15-page limit does not include the Coversheet, Executive Summary, Budget and Budget Justification, Data Information and Sharing Plan, Literature Citation, Current and Pending Support, Curriculum Vitae, Letters of Commitment, Required Forms, and NEPA statement.

Contents of the Project Description:

- i. Description of the project's scientific, technical, archaeological, historical or socioeconomic importance and merit. Will it potentially challenge existing paradigms or lead to the formulation of new paradigms?
- ii. Description of the project's goals and objectives and the proposed methodology.
- iii. Brief descriptions of the expected contributions of each major collaborator.
- iv. Description of any complementary funding.
- v. Clarification of field operations dates and any operational constraints.
- vi. Anticipated outputs (e.g., potential discoveries, knowledge and impact, published papers, reports, meetings, education and outreach material).
- vii. Describe how the project addresses OER's mission for ocean exploration and marine archaeological baseline characterization; and/or the advancement of undersea technology and its applicability to address NOAA's broader mission described in Sections I.A and B.
- viii. Applicant must state their willingness to participate in OER outreach/education activities as described in VIII.

d. Data/Information Sharing Plan: A Data/Information Sharing Plan of no more than two pages is required. The applicant must state their intent to comply with NOAA and Federal government data policy and regulations discussed in more detail under Section VIII.B. A typical plan should include descriptions of the types of environmental data and information expected to be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; policies addressing data stewardship and preservation; procedures for providing access, sharing, and security; and prior experience in publishing such data. A public website discusses Data Management Best Practices and provides data sharing and data management plan examples. (<http://www.ncddc.noaa.gov/activities/science-technology/data-management/>).

e. A concise summary of significant results and achievements: This summary should include publications and outputs, and data/information sharing experience from any prior, or ongoing, Ocean Exploration and Research funding.

f. A summary of current funding support: Applicants must provide information on all their current and pending Federal support for ongoing projects and proposals, including potential subsequent funding in the case of continuing grants. The proposed project and all other projects or activities using Federal assistance or that requires a portion of time of the Principal Investigator or other senior personnel should be included. The relationship between the proposed project and these other projects should be described, and the number of person-months per year to be devoted to the projects must be clearly stated.

g. Brief resume for each investigator: A maximum of two pages for each Principal and Co-Principal Investigator(s), including a representative list of recent relevant publications.

h. Detailed tabular budget: Separate budgets within the proposal must be provided if more than one funding action is anticipated (e.g., if funds are to be allocated to more than one institution or agency through subcontracts).

i. Budget justification: All applications must have a detailed budget narrative explaining and justifying the federal and the nonfederal expenditures. Refer to the NOAA Grants Management Division Budget Narrative Guidance document for complete instructions at: [http://www.ago.noaa.gov/grants/docs/budget\\_narrative\\_guidance-04.09.2015.pdf](http://www.ago.noaa.gov/grants/docs/budget_narrative_guidance-04.09.2015.pdf). Be sure to include justifications of salary and travel costs (OER does not pay for federal salaries); costs for analysis, interpretation, data archiving, and publication of project results; non-standard items, including ship time and submersibles; and any cost sharing or in-kind contributions. Multi-year proposals must include budgets for each year and a summary budget for the entire award period. Expenses must include a detailed breakdown by category of cost using object

classes found on the SF-424A and separated into Federal and non-Federal shares as they relate to specific aspects of the project, with appropriate narrative justification for both the Federal and non-Federal (if applicable) shares. The narrative budget justification should be sufficiently detailed to enable a clear understanding of the cost breakdown calculations and information sources used to come up with the line item totals in each object class of the SF-424A budget form. Funding for any required ship or submersible assets must be included in the proposal. Leveraging with non-OER funded cruises or utilizing NOAA ship time is not required but strongly encouraged.

j. NEPA statement: Applicants must consider possible environmental impacts of their project and are required to submit comprehensive answers to questions in sections A-F of the NEPA questionnaire (also section H, if the applicant's proposed activities are related to fisheries sampling and research). The answers to these questions will provide NOAA with the information required to comply with NEPA. See Section VI.B.3 for further information. Applicants may contact [margot.bohan@noaa.gov](mailto:margot.bohan@noaa.gov) with any difficulties they may have answering the questions. The NEPA questionnaire can be found at: <http://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/about/what-we-do/funding-opportunities.html>.

k. Forms: Non-Federal applicants must submit a complete NOAA grant application package provided from [Grants.gov](http://Grants.gov).

l. A list of suggested reviewers: If the applicant chooses to do so, the application may include a list of suggested reviewers (submit names, e-mail addresses, and phone numbers) of five non-conflicted potential peer reviewers. Applicants may also identify individuals recommended for exclusion from the review process (including justification for any such recommendation).

### C. Submission Dates and Times

Completed pre-proposals are required and must be submitted by email and received by 5:00 pm EDT on October 23, 2015. Before 5:00 pm EDT, an auto-reply message will notify each applicant that their email with pre-proposal material was received. After 5:00 am EDT, an auto-reply message will notify applicant that their email with pre-proposal material submission is late and will not be considered.

A complete pre-proposal packet is a requirement in order to be allowed to submit a full proposal. Applicants will receive an email encouraging or discouraging a full proposal submission by November 6, 2015. If you have not received a reply by November 13, 2015 contact OER at [oer.ffa2016@noaa.gov](mailto:oer.ffa2016@noaa.gov) or (301) 734-1002 as soon as possible. The final decision to submit a full proposal is up to the applicant.

Full proposals must be received by 5:00 pm EST on January 8, 2016. Non-Federal entities must submit their application through Grants.gov. The submission receipt with date and time will serve as the basis for determining timeliness. Federal applications are submitted by email. Timeliness is indicated on the email header.

Proposals received after their respective cutoff dates and times will not be considered.

Please note:

Applicants may have to register or renew their central contractor registration prior to submitting to Grants.gov. Grants.gov will not accept submissions if the applicant has not been authorized or if credentials are incorrect. Authorizations and credential corrections can take several days to establish. Please plan your time accordingly to avoid being disqualified for a late submission. For further information please visit the System for Award Management website: <https://www.sam.gov>. For questions please visit the Federal Service Desk website: <https://www.fsd.gov>.

#### D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this office's announcement are subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." Applicants must contact their State's Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to find out about and comply with the State's process under EO 12372. The names and addresses of the SPOCs are listed on the Office of Management and Budget's website: [https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants\\_spoc/](https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc/)

#### E. Funding Restrictions

No special restrictions apply.

#### F. Other Submission Requirements

##### Address for Submitting Proposals

Pre-proposal submissions must be submitted by e-mail to [oer.ffa2016@noaa.gov](mailto:oer.ffa2016@noaa.gov). Please put your last name in the subject heading, along with the words "ocean exploration pre-proposal," e.g., "Jones ocean exploration pre-proposal." Adobe PDF format is preferred. Full proposals from non-Federal applicants must be submitted through Grants.gov. Federal applicants are ineligible to submit via Grants.gov and must submit their application by e-mail to [oer.ffa2016@noaa.gov](mailto:oer.ffa2016@noaa.gov).

#### V. Application Review Information

## A. Evaluation Criteria

### 1. Pre-proposal Evaluation Criteria

Pre-proposals will be evaluated by the OER program using the following criteria to either encourage or discourage submission of full proposals:

- a. Relevance to OER's goals and consistency with the priorities of this announcement.
- b. Scientific and technical merit (e.g., does it have exploration value and potential for new discovery; is it bold, innovative and exciting; is there potential for technical innovation or high impact for ocean science, etc.).
- c. Qualifications and competence of the applicants (including past performance on prior OER awards).
- d. Reasonableness of costs (including value of additional funding and in-kind contributions).
- e. Logistical feasibility (e.g., ship or equipment availability).

The final decision to submit a full proposal is up to the applicants.

### 2. Full Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Full proposals will be evaluated and rated individually by at least three independent peer reviewers (mail reviews) and a peer-review panel representing expertise in the relevant disciplines. The review will consist of a determination and analysis of strengths, weaknesses, deficiencies and risks associated with each proposal. The following criteria, and corresponding weight values, are to be used to evaluate the full proposals. Peer reviewers will assess the extent to which the proposal has demonstrated the following:

- a. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of the proposed project to the program goals: This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, State, or local activities (35%): This criterion asks reviewers to consider the extent to which 1) the proposal is exploration focused and contributes to baseline characterization, 2) the work supports OER's mission goals (Section I. A&B), 3) the anticipated results could have high impact and application to multiple NOAA mission requirements, and 4) it meets OER data management and public engagement policies including archiving and sharing data, sample collections, and education and outreach;
- b. Technical/scientific merit: This assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives (35%): This criterion asks the reviewers to determine 1) if the proposal applies high risk/high reward advanced technology, 2) if the project is interdisciplinary involving

multi partners, 3) if the project goals and objectives are clear and the methods are commensurate for the proposed work;

c. Overall qualifications of applicants (10%): This criterion asks the reviewers to ascertain whether the applicant(s) possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For the OER review process this includes judging: 1) the qualifications of the applicant(s) and 2) the strength, diversity, and depth of any partnership to accomplish the work proposed. If the applicant has previously received OER funding, this criterion also asks the reviewers to assess the applicant's prior OER award performance (e.g., timely publication of results and sharing of data);

d. Project costs (20%): This criterion ask the reviewers to evaluate the proposal budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the proposed project needs and time-frame. They will also give very favorable consideration to the value of additional funding, in-kind contributions, and leveraging other projects with compatible objectives or resources.

#### B. Review and Selection Process

Once a full proposal is received by NOAA, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. When a proposal is determined to be in compliance and complete, the proposal will be subjected to peer review.

Peer reviewers will rate the individual proposals using the evaluation criteria and percentage weights provided above and will provide summary comments. Both Federal and non-Federal experts in the field may be used in the peer-review process, which will include external mail reviews and a peer-review panel. Peer-review panelists will not be asked to reach consensus on individual proposals nor will they rank the proposals. Based on external mail reviewer scores, summary comments, and summaries and scores from review panelists, the OER Director, in consultation with OER scientific and technical staff, will make the final decision whether or not to recommend funding.

#### C. Selection Factors

The Selecting Official shall select awards in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors:

1. Availability of funding
2. Balance/distribution of funds
  - a. Geographically

- b. By type of institutions
  - c. By type of partners
  - d. By exploration/research topics
  - e. By project types
3. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other Federal agencies
4. Office priorities and policy factors
5. Applicants' prior award performance, including data/information sharing
6. Partnerships
7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer.

#### D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

OER's intent is to notify all applicants (Federal and non-Federal) of the results of the peer review of their proposal, as well as OER's final recommendation to award or decline funding, by email, within approximately 180 days after receipt of the full proposal. Progress of the peer-review process may affect this timeline. Successful non-federal applicants will receive notification that their proposal has been funded from the NOAA Grants Management Division. Official notification of funding, signed by a NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that enables OER to distribute funding. Notifications will be issued via email to the proposal's Authorizing Official.

## VI. Award Administration Information

### A. Award Notices

#### 1. Notification of Acceptance

Successful applicants will receive notification that the application has been recommended for funding by an official of the Office of Ocean Exploration and Research. This notification is not an authorization to begin performance of the project. The NOAA Grants Officer will provide notice to the applicant that they have received the award. This official notification of funding, signed by a NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. Notifications will be issued to the Authorizing Official and the Principal

Investigator of the project. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their application was not selected for recommendation.

## 2. Modification to Applications

Successful applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to final approval of an award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the collaboration duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement in the activities of each partnership will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and OER. Project activities should not be initiated in the expectation of grant funding until a notice of award document is received from the NOAA Grants Management Division.

## B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

### 1. Department of Commerce Requirements

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2014 (79 FR 78390) are applicable to this solicitation. This notice can be viewed at: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-30/pdf/2014-30297.pdf>

### 2. Limitation of Liability

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal or project preparation costs. Publication of this announcement does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project.

### 3. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

If recommended for funding, applicants whose proposed projects may have an environmental impact will be asked to furnish sufficient information to assist NOAA in assessing the potential environmental consequences of supporting the project. NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for each project which seeks NOAA funding. Detailed information on NEPA can be found at the NOAA NEPA website, [www.nepa.noaa.gov](http://www.nepa.noaa.gov), including the NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA ([http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216\\_6.pdf](http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6.pdf)), and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations ([https://ceq.doe.gov/ceq\\_regulations/regulations.html](https://ceq.doe.gov/ceq_regulations/regulations.html)). If needed by NOAA for NEPA assessment, applicants will be asked to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species, and habitats to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems).



In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting an environmental assessment if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA to identify feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases, if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

#### 4. Unpaid or Delinquent Tax Liability

In accordance with current Federal appropriations law, NOAA will provide a successful corporate applicant a form to be completed by its authorized representatives certifying that the corporation has no Federally-assessed unpaid or delinquent tax liability or recent felony criminal convictions under any Federal Law.

#### 5. Federal Funding Accountability and transparency Act of 2006

This Act includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier sub-awards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards issued in FY 2011 or later. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Sub-award Reporting System (FSRS) available at [www.FSRS.gov](http://www.FSRS.gov) on all sub-awards over \$25,000.

### C. Reporting

Grants, cooperative agreements, and intra or interagency agreements have the same reporting requirements. An OER point of contact will work with awardees to facilitate reporting requirements described here and in section VIII “Other Information”.

1. A cruise plan or project plan is expected to be submitted to OER prior to the start of field work, in time to meet ship/platform requirements but no later than 30 days prior to the beginning of the expedition or field work. If multiple field efforts are planned, it is anticipated that a cruise plan will be submitted for each portion. If the proposal does not include fieldwork, a project plan must be submitted no later than 60 days after the award is made.

2. Within 15 days of the completion of the expedition or field work recipients are expected to provide a “quick-look report”. This requirement will be waived for projects with no field components, as it is anticipated that this information will be included in semi-annual reports.

If multiple field efforts are planned, it is anticipated that a “quick-look report” will be submitted for each portion.

There is no required format for these reports, but OER will provide a template that can be used along with suggested items to be addressed. These three documents will be made publicly available along with the cruise datasets, no later than two years following completion of the expedition.

3. In addition, progress reports are due semi-annually and cover 6-month periods that begin with the start date of the project. For non-federal awardees, progress reports are submitted electronically to NOAA Grants Management Division through Grants Online no later than 30 days after each 6-month project period. A final report is due no later than 90 days after the expiration date of an award. For federal awardees, progress reports are expected on the same timeline, but will be submitted by email to [oyer.fo2016@noaa.gov](mailto:oyer.fo2016@noaa.gov). Progress reports should detail grant related activities that have occurred during the reporting period that correspond with the goals and objectives identified in the narrative, as well as provide specific, project-related information, including a summary budget table of expenses for that period.

4. Within 60 days of completion of the expedition/field work (or annually if the work is multi-year) grant recipients are expected to provide:

- a. An updated collection level metadata record identifying completed collections and including Digital Object Identifiers (if assigned);
- b. A data inventory identifying data types collected, data release dates, and/or documents specifying proposed exceptions to the open data access policy (e.g., data that may have homeland/national security, cultural heritage, or protected resources value in accordance with NAO 212-151;
- c. Expedition/field work location data (e.g.: ship navigation track or area of operations for public GIS display).

For continuing observations, data inventories should be submitted periodically if there is a significant change in location, type, or frequency of such observations.

## VII. Agency Contacts

For further information, contact the NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration and Research at (301) 734-1002 or [oer.ffa2016@noaa.gov](mailto:oer.ffa2016@noaa.gov). Email inquiries should include the Principal Investigator's name in the subject heading. Inquiries can also be mailed to: NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration and Research, ATTN: OER FFO 2016, SSMC3, Rm 10315, 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910.

## VIII. Other Information

By receiving funding from OER, all applicants agree to the following expectations for sample collection, education and outreach, data management, and website requirements. To help meet these requirements, one or more NOAA staff or NOAA designee(s) may become members of, and assist, the at-sea science party serving roles as Data Managers or Web Coordinators.

### A. Education and Outreach

All funded applicants and collaborators are strongly encouraged to cooperate with OER in facilitating education and outreach activities associated with their projects. NOAA's Ocean Explorer website (<http://www.oceanexplorer.noaa.gov>) is the principal vehicle for chronicling and documenting all missions supported by OER. OER will assess and provide support for education and/or outreach activities in collaboration with the applicant, as warranted.

All Principle Investigators will be expected to provide a summary article for the website within 14 days following completion of the field work or project. In consultation with Principle Investigators, OER selects several projects each field season to be fully documented on the Ocean Explorer website during the expedition. An OER Web Coordinator will work with the applicant and science party to determine the content of web offerings, and to develop and implement a web production plan for these select projects. A berth on the host research vessel should be dedicated for the Web Coordinator if feasible.

Web content may include accompanying education materials. OER Education team members will facilitate development of materials and activities. PIs may be asked to participate in the development of lesson plans, professional development for teachers, accommodation of a teacher/educator-at-sea, participation in a media event or press conference to describe the expedition and its findings, and at-sea media participation.

### B. Data Management Guidance (Sharing of Findings, Data, and Other Information)

Applicants receiving funds from NOAA OER are required to comply with NOAA Administrative Order 212-15 ([https://www.nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/nao\\_212-15.php](https://www.nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/nao_212-15.php))

Management of Environmental Data and Information and specifically with the guidance provided in The NOAA Data Sharing Policy for Grants and Cooperative Agreements ([https://www.nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/documents/EDMC\\_PD-DSPNG\\_final\\_v2.pdf](https://www.nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/documents/EDMC_PD-DSPNG_final_v2.pdf)). This policy is consistent with all Government agencies including NSF.

Environmental data and information collected and/or created under an awarded grant/cooperative agreement and for any other projects supported by OER, will be made visible, accessible and independently understandable to users in a timely manner (e.g., no later than two (2) years after the data are collected or created) free of charge or at minimal cost that is no more than the cost of distribution to the user, except where limited by law, regulation, policy or by security requirements.

1. A Data/Information Sharing Plan of no more than two pages is required as part of the Project Description. This plan will be reviewed and evaluated. A typical plan should include descriptions of the types of environmental data and information that will be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; policies addressing data stewardship and preservation; procedures for providing access, sharing, and security; and prior experience in publishing such data. The Data/Information Sharing Plan will be reviewed as part of the Full Proposal Evaluation Criteria.
2. The Data/Information Sharing Plan (and any subsequent revisions or updates) must be made publicly available at time of award and, thereafter, will be posted with the published data.
3. Failing to share environmental data and information in accordance with the submitted Data/Information Sharing Plan may lead to disallowed costs and be considered by NOAA when making future award decisions.

Implementation of data management in OER is also guided by the 2000 President's Panel on Ocean Exploration's recommendation for a rapid and unfettered data management and dissemination process (<http://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/about/what-we-do/program-review/presidents-panel-on-ocean-exploration-report.pdf>), and by Public law 111-11 Section XII Ocean Exploration (see 33 USC 3403). Applicants awarded funding by NOAA OER must state their intent to comply with above regulations.

To ensure broad public access to information, OER publishes the Digital Atlas [http://www.ncddc.noaa.gov/website/google\\_maps/OE/mapsOE.htm?textSearch=Okeanos](http://www.ncddc.noaa.gov/website/google_maps/OE/mapsOE.htm?textSearch=Okeanos). The Atlas is an online geospatial index that is the principal method of providing public

access to data associated with all missions supported by OER. The metadata produced to satisfy the NOAA data descriptions of the types of environmental data and information sharing requirements will be published to the NOAA data catalog and to the home of the U.S. Government's open data website (<http://www.data.gov/geospatial>).

In coordination with receipt of the cruise plan or project plan listed under Section VI.C participants will be required to provide information to the OER Data Management Coordinator to initialize metadata and facilitate Digital Atlas publication. The OER Data Management Coordinator, when not otherwise specifically designated in each Grant or Contract award, will be the NOAA National Coastal Data Development Center (NCDDC) OER Liaison Officer that can be contacted at: [oer.info.mgmt@noaa.gov](mailto:oer.info.mgmt@noaa.gov) or Tel: 228-688-2256 or toll-free 1-866-732-2382.

A public website discusses Data Management Best Practices and provides data sharing and data management plan examples (<http://www.ncddc.noaa.gov/activities/science-technology/data-management/>).

#### C. Proprietary or Privileged Information

Patentable ideas, trade secrets, and privileged or confidential commercial or financial information, disclosure of which may harm the proposer, should be included in proposals only when such information is necessary to convey an understanding of the proposed project. Such information should be clearly marked in the proposal or included as a separate statement accompanying the proposal and should be appropriately labeled with a legend such as, "The following is proprietary or confidential information that (name of proposing organization) requests not be released to persons outside the Government, except for purposes of review and evaluation." While NOAA will make every effort to prevent unauthorized access to such material, it is not responsible or in any way liable for the release of such material.

#### D. Release of Grantee Proposal Information

A proposal that results in a NOAA award will be available to the public on request, except for privileged information or material that is personal, proprietary, or otherwise exempt from disclosure under law. Appropriate labeling in the proposal aids identification of what may be specifically exempt. Such information will be withheld from public disclosure to the extent permitted by law, including the Freedom of Information Act. Without assuming any liability for inadvertent disclosure, NOAA will seek to limit disclosure of such information to its employees and to outside reviewers only when necessary for merit review of the proposal or as otherwise authorized by law.

Portions of proposals resulting in grants that contain descriptions of inventions in which either the Government or the grantee owns a right, title, or interest (including a non-exclusive license) will not normally be made available to the public until a reasonable time has been allowed for filing patent applications. NOAA will notify the grantee of receipt of requests for copies of funded proposals so the grantee may advise NOAA of such inventions described, or other confidential, commercial, or proprietary information contained in the proposal.